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ABSTRACT

The "sense making" process structures humans' categorization, perceptual, and expressive processes. These "sense making" references are ultimately derived from four distinct "root metaphors": mechanism or mechanistic thinking (machine), formism or formistic thinking (similarity), organicism or organistic thinking (organic process), and contextualism or contextual thinking (ongoing act). When translated to intercultural settings, these metaphors address two questions: What functions do metaphors serve in the context of culture? and What are the implications of these metaphors to intercultural communication research? Metaphor is intricately linked to the subjective cultural system. The use of the root metaphors and the emphasis one places on them will influence one's perspective of reality and social order. Different epistemological orientations, in turn, will impact one's view of communication and culture in the context of intercultural communication research. From the machinery image of research, intercultural communication research is viewed as a purposeful, rational activity. In contrast, from the organismic imagery, such research is viewed from a goal-emergent model perspective. Knowledge structures that are produced under the mechanistic mode are usually law-like principles aiming for wide generalizability and application. Under the organismic imagery, knowledge structures attempt to present interpretive truths based on particular symbolic events and situations. The logic of such knowledge structures can be applied to particular situations within the complex fabric of local culture. (HOD)

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The World Hypotheses: Implications For Intercultural Communication Research

Human actions are grounded in the symbolic constructs which give rise to social meanings. This process of reality construction is framed within the larger context of a cultural system. Culture, as a system of symbols and meanings, mandates how activities and events around an individual should be interpreted and understood. Philosopher Stephen Pepper (1942), in his seminal work entitled World Hypotheses, argues cogently that humans' "sense making" processes can be basically classified into four distinct world hypotheses or world orientations: Mechanism, formism, organicism, and contextualism. These coherent sets of assumptions are grounded in the root metaphors (that is, machine, form, organ, and context) of everyday, "common sense" observations.

Metaphor, in this context, is defined as a "creative form which produces its effect through a crossing of images....the processes of comparison, substitution, and interaction between the images" (Morgan, 1980, p. 610). These images, myths, rituals, and postulates are the basic properties of a unique cultural system. It is culture which provides the basis for a meaningful system of human actions; and cultural norms are oriented toward movements and patterns for actions. Images and symbolic forms such as verbal and nonverbal codes constitute the cultural galaxies of a meaningful human interaction system.

The objective of this essay is to develop systematically the relationships between Pepper's (1942) world hypotheses and theory-building and research in intercultural communication. Specifically, the paper will be developed

in three sections: (1) Pepper's four sets of root metaphors--machine, form, organ, and context--will be introduced; (2) the relationships of metaphorical functions--metaorganization function, perceptual influence function, and behavioral expressive function--to culture will be explored; and (3) the implications of the root metaphors of "machine" and "organ" to intercultural communication research will be discussed. Fundamental to the theme of this essay is the notion that human "sense making" process structures one's categorization process, perceptual process, and expressive process of the universe surrounding one's self. Metaphorical images of machine, form, organ, and context, will influence how one conceptualizes the twin constructs of communication and culture in the context of intercultural communication research.

WORLD HYPOTHESES

According to Pepper (1942), humans' "sense making" references are ultimately derived from four distinct "root metaphors"--the origins of everyday common sense observations. A conceptual discussion of each metaphorical orientation will be introduced here.

Mechanism or mechanistic thinking has been labelled as "experimental thinking" (Bartlett, 1958). Its root metaphor is that of the machine. A mechanistic thinker views the world around him/her as possessing discrete and seperate ontological existence. S/he is interested in positing the question of "why" in everyday thinking and believes in the supremacy of causal reasoning and speculation of people's motives for actions. Formism or formistic thinking has been labelled as "everyday thinking" (Bartlett, 1958). Its underlying root metaphor is "similarity." A formistic thinker conceptualizes the world around him/her based on the principles of similarity and typification. Events are placed and catalogued closely together because of their definitions, commonalities, and "ideal

to define or approximate the ideal way of doing things through comparative and categorization processes. S/he is interested in positing the question of "where" things belong together and how they typify one another.

Organicism or organistic thinking has been previously labelled as "systems thinking" (Angyal, 1963) and "patterned thinking" (Dienes & Jeeves, 1965). The root metaphor for organicism is the "organic process." The organistic thinker possesses "the thinking of the artist." S/he perceives the world around him/her as interconnected events of a larger process. The world is unfold to the organicist as a series of patterned constellations. The system thinker believes that there is an inherent totality in all expressed forms. S/he is primarily interested in the question of "how" patterns or puzzles are fitted together in a fixed picture. Finally, contextualism or contextual thinker has been labelled as "relational thinking" (Lee, Kagan, & Rabson, 1963). Its root metaphor is the "ongoing act" or "dynamic dramatic active event" in its context (Pepper, 1942, p. 232). For the contextualistic thinker, it is the context that gives rise to any symbolic meanings. Meanings are embedded in a fluid context that are subject to reconstruction and co-creation. For the contextualists, context is a constantly changing phenomenon; it is not a constant variable. S/he conceptualizes the world or reality around him/her based on a wide variety of perspectives. They will not follow one absolute truth. S/he is mainly interested in the question of "how" the fluid, interactive symbolic process of human interaction works against a constantly changing backdrop.

Thus, each of the world hypotheses constitutes a rather unique and distinct perspective of structuring and interpreting experiences beyond and within an individual. When translating these four basic root metaphors

to intercultural communication setting, two major questions await to be addressed: First, what functions do metaphors serve in the context of culture? Second, what are the implications of the four root metaphors to intercultural communication research?

Metaphorical Orientations and Culture

In order to answer the first question, one has to first define culture. Culture, in this essay, is simply defined as "a system of symbols and meanings" (Schneider, 1976). Culture is concerned with "a body of definitions, premises, statements, postulates, presumptions, propositions, and perceptions about the nature of the universe and man's place" (Schneider, 1976, p. 203). The core set of assumptions and values point to a "relatively unified set of shared symbolic ideas associated with one or more patterns of social ordering" within a system (Olsen, 1978, p. 161). Cultural values, norms, and ideals are expressed through shared symbolic activities and actions. Symbolic activities in turn, are stemmed from the "subjective culture" of an individual *in situ* within the larger social-cultural contexts.

The concept "subjective culture" derives its origin from the seminal work of Harry C. Triandis (1972). According to him, "subjective culture" is defined as a cultural group's characteristic way of perceiving the human-made part of its environment. How an individual experiences his/her social environment, categorizes his/her experiences, perceives and expresses group's norms, values, rules, and roles, are all aspects of subjective culture.

Metaphor, which is a linguistic transference device, is intricately linked to the subjective cultural system. The use of metaphors such as machine, form, organ, and context, and the emphasis one places on respective root metaphors, will have a strong influence on how one perceives reality and social order.

Different epistemological orientations, in turn, will impact on how one views communication and culture in the context of intercultural communication research. If one views culture from the root metaphor of "machine," one is assuming that culture has an objective, ontological existence. If one views culture from the root metaphor of "organ," one would focus on the mutually interdependent parts that constitute the whole. The following section will present the specific functions that metaphors serve in culture. The last section of this essay will provide a general analysis of Pepper's root metaphors (in particular, the "machine" metaphor, and the "organ" metaphor) to intercultural communication research.

As a language tool, metaphor basically serves the following three basic functions: metaorganizational function (Maruyama, 1965), perceptual influence function, and behavioral expressive function (Bednar and Hineline, 1982). The metaorganizational function of metaphors refers to the individual's categorization process of social experiences based on a set of implicit criteria within one's head. These implicit criteria are generated and developed through the value premises (such as desirable modes, means, and ends) and normative patterns of culture. As Schneider (1976) aptly notes, "where norms tell the actor how to play the scene, culture tells the actor how the scene is set and what it all means. Where norms tell the actor how to behave in the presence of ghosts, gods, and human beings, culture tells the actors what ghosts, gods, and human beings are and what they are all about" (p. 203). The normative rules and patterns of a culture interact with the subjective culture of an individual and influence the categorization principles of how one structures the events around him/her.

The perceptual influence function of metaphors refers to the individual's selective filtering process between self and social reality. In employing

particular sets of metaphors (for example, "machine," "operation," "action-reaction," " design," "measurement," and "control"), these figurative forms can either provide focus and sharpness to a particular image or "picture" of reality out there, or they can "reframe" reality in such a way that they may release our conventional modes of thinking concerning certain concepts or ideas (for example, viewing culture as "form" as versus viewing culture as "context"; or viewing organization as "culture" as versus viewing culture as "organization"). These dual sub-functions of "perceptual directing" and "perceptual reframing" (Bednar & Hineline, 1982, p. 11) orient our attentions toward new focus of study. In the context of intercultural communication research, the use of vivid metaphorical images in the research setting, may produce and generate new insights to problems that have never been noticed before by the ethnographer or the anthropologist.

Finally, according to Bednar and Hineline (1982), the behavioral expressive function of metaphors refers to the different means of metaphorical usage such as elaboration, conciseness, translation, and invention. Elaboration refers to the "intensity, emotive force, richness of detail, and verbal power of metaphorical images"(p. 6). Conciseness, according to these authors, refers to the compact yet complete nature of the metaphorical act. Translation, refers to the association of familiar concepts with the radical and the new. Invention refers to the use of an entire new metaphor to express what has never been expressed before.

Metaphor, in short, is a reality creation and a reality capturing symbolic tool. Transferring the various functions of metaphors to the study of culture, the following sets of questions can be deduced. On the relationship between metaorganization function of metaphor and culture, one can ask: What kinds of dominant metaphors do the cultural members in the system use

to structure and organize their social experience? Do particular modes of metaphors hold particular "logics" in different cultural systems? Do cultural members in different cultures classify information or symbolic events based on different metaphorical models (for example, linear model, decision-making tree model, hierarchical model, circular or spiral model)?

On the relationship between perceptual influence function of metaphor and culture, one can posit the following questions: Can ethnographers or participant observers be imprisoned by their own cultural metaphors to the extent of not perceiving the key metaphors that are present in an alien culture? How can a researcher go about identifying and explaining the uses and implications of dominant metaphors in different cultures? Are certain individuals (for example, status, age, social class, occupational prestige) more influential than others in initiating and spreading metaphorical trends in diverse cultural settings? How do metaphors become transfer from one speech community to another?

Finally, on the relationship between expressive function of metaphor and culture, the following questions can be asked: How do individuals from different cultures achieve metaphorical alignment and consensus in a system? How can an ethnographer use cultural metaphors effectively to integrate oneself to the research community? Can we make a distinction between "metaphorical competence" and "metaphorical performance" in a speech community? If yes, what are the implications of such distinctions? The next section will address some of the critical issues stemming from the use of machine-form root metaphors and organ-context root metaphors in intercultural communication research.

Root Metaphors: Research Functions

According to Kuhn (1970), the term "paradigm" refers to the "entire

constellations of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on, shared by the members of a given community" (p. 175). The configurations of how one conceptualizes social reality and formulates a favored world view are oftentime, based on the ground assumptions and values of a cultural system. Pepper's four metaphorical orientations--mechanism, formism, organicism, and contextualism--represent four preferred views of the universe. These four world perceptual orientations also correspond to the findings or observations of the Western versus the Eastern perspectives. For example, Edward T. Hall (1976) divides different communication systems on a continuum of low-context and high-context cultures. Low context culture refers to a group of cultures which value individual orientation, rational logic, overt communication patterns, and maintain heterogeneous normative structure (for example, Germany, Scandinavia, and United States). High context culture , on the other hand,refers to a group of cultures which value group orientation, spiral logic, covert communication patterns, and maintain a homogeneous normative structure (for example, China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam). The low context cultures operate primarily from the "machine-form" root metaphors. The high context cultures work predominantly from the "organ-context" root metaphors. Countless other intercultural studies (Barnlund, 1974; Benedict, 1946; Condon, 1977; Hofstede,1980; Hsu, 1981; Nakane, 1970; Okabe, 1981; Stewart, 1971; Triandis, 1972) have supported this observation and divided the Western versus the Eastern world views as either "classification universe" and "relational universe" (Maruyama, 1965), "horizontal society" and "vertical society" (Nakane, 1970), or "masculine culture" and "feminine culture" (Hofstede, 1980) All these cultural taxonomies in part, have been derived through the direct

and indirect use of the "machine-like" root metaphor in the Western world view; while the Eastern world view operates from the "living organism" metaphorical mode.

Based on the "machine" root metaphor, the following assumptions can be deduced: (1) individuals respond to their outer reality in a lawlike, "mechanistic" manner (mechanism); (2) reality assumes an objective, ontological existence seperates from the individual cultural members; and (3) individuals process external information through classification, typification, comparison and contrast procedures (formistic thinking). Based on the "organ" root metaphor, we can posit the following three assumptions: (1) individuals sustain and create symbolic reality within a rule-like, patterned structure; (organicism); (2) reality assumes a subjective and an intersubjective existence and is manifested through the interactive process of symbolic discourse; and (3) individuals process streams of information or behavior in situ with the flow of the social and cultural contexts (contextual thinking).

In extending these basic assumptions of the "machine" metaphor and the "organ" metaphor to intercultural communication inquiry, the machinery image in essence represents the "outsider inquiry" mode, while the organismic image represents the "insider inquiry" mode (Evered & Louis, 1981). Three critical issues will be addressed based on these two distinctive modes of social science inquiry: (1) aim of intercultural communication research; (2) investigator's role in the inquiry process; and (3) knowledge structures that are acquired through these two metaphorical modes of research.

From the machinery imagery of research, the aim of intercultural communicatio research is viewed as a purposeful, rational activity. The machine model is

based on mechanical concepts such as "operational definition," "control," "design," "prediction," "cause-effect," and "measurement." The machine performs its duties through law-like routines, mechanistic movements, and cause-effect outcomes. "Outsider inquiry" pursues a means-ends relationship in the study of communication and culture; and the concepts of communication and culture are assumed to maintain objective, observable characteristics that are identifiable and explainable. In contrast, from the organismic imagery of research, the aim of intercultural communication inquiry is viewed from a goal-emergent model perspective. The images of organismic-systems such as words like "immersion," "experiential," "sensitized concepts," "idiographic," "contextual," "thickness," and "density of description" reflect an insider mode of inquiry. An "organism" is a "living entity in constant flux and change, interacting with its environment to satisfy its needs" (Morgan, 1980). Culture, when being viewed from the organismic metaphorical mode, regulates changes and stability through the movements of mutually interdependent elements within the system. Intercultural researchers, in this context, are primarily interested in observing and understanding the interrelationships of activities that maintain stability and regulate change in the social environment.

The investigator's role in the outsider mode of inquiry is that of a detached observer. This role is derived from the assumption that the phenomenon under study is objectively detached from the observer. The investigator's role in the insider mode of inquiry is that of a participant observer. This role is stemmed from the assumption that the act under study is symbolically represented. Researchers have to be physically present to capture the true meanings and implications of a particular symbolic act in relationship to its larger social and cultural settings.

Finally, knowledge structures that are produced under the mechanistic mode are usually law-like principles aiming for wide generalizability and application. Knowledge structures that are acquired under the organismic imagery, attempt to present interpretive truths based on particular symbolic events and situations. The logic of such knowledge structures can be applied to particular situations within the complex fabric of local culture.

In closing, this essay has addressed two primary issues of metaphor to culture: the first issue concerns the basic functions of metaphor to culture and the second issue concerns the paradigmatic functions of root metaphors to intercultural communication research. Root metaphors embody different aspects of viewing social reality and favored world views. By exploring different meanings and implications of root metaphors to culture, hopefully this essay contributes to a sense of appreciation and awareness of how metaphorical images direct our thinking process, and ultimately "frame" our picture of the universe.

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